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**Subject:** Weekly Compass: December 15, 2020



Weekly Update: 12/15/2020

Welcome to the Weekly Compass, your gateway to information about recent and upcoming ORD activities. If you have ideas for the Weekly Compass, please send them to the editors. To see past issues, visit the [Weekly Compass archive on ORD@work](#).

## Weekly Note from Jennifer

ORDers- There are just a few weeks left to make a CFC pledge. As of last week, the total pledged by ORD was \$36,973.00! To donate or to pledge volunteer hours to support CFC charities, please visit the [CFC donation portal](#). For more information, visit the [EPA CFC intranet site](#).

I hope you can join us today at 2pm for ORD's Celebration of EPA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We'll be joined by some of our former ORD leaders as they look back and share some thoughts about the future. We'll also learn about a recent collaboration between our scientists and the Girl Scouts. I am really looking forward to this conversation. -Jennifer

## Quick Updates

- Know a K-12 student who is setting an environmental stewardship example for their community? Encourage them to apply for our [President's Environmental Youth Award \(PEYA\)](#) by February 19. Questions? Email: [peya@epa.gov](mailto:peya@epa.gov)
- Know a K-12 teacher using environmental education to set an example for their students and inspire their learning? Encourage them to apply for our [Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators \(PIAEE\)](#) by February 19. Questions? Email: [piaee@epa.gov](mailto:piaee@epa.gov)
- Nominate your colleagues for the Partnership for Public Service's [2020 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals](#), or the "Sammies" through January 15
- To donate or to pledge volunteer hours to support CFC charities, please visit the [CFC donation portal](#). For more information, visit the [EPA CFC intranet site](#)
- The [Interventions and Communication Strategies to Reduce Health Risks of Wildland Fire Smoke Exposures](#) STAR RFA closes tonight, 12/15 at 11:59PM EST
- The [National Priorities: Evaluation of Pollutants in Biosolids](#) RFA will remain open through 1/5/2021.
- The Science to Achieve Results (STAR) [Viral Pathogen and Surrogate Approaches for Assessing Treatment Performance in Water Reuse Request for Applications](#) RFA is open through 1/6/2021
- EPA is partnering with the Treasury Executive Institute (TEI) to offer [coaching and learning activities](#) for agency leaders.
- The [ORD@Work ELMS homepage](#) is a great place to visit for a wide range of ELMS related information. Visit the ["ELMS Efforts" page](#) for reflections on our FY20 ELMS successes, submit ideas implemented on the ["Idea Implementation Input" page](#).
- Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agency's workforce, all time-off awards due to expire between April 14, 2020 and September 30, 2020, will now expire December 31, 2020.
- The [50<sup>th</sup> anniversary store](#) is now live!
- Upcoming Webinars:
  - 12/16, 3PM EST: [EPA Tools & Resources Webinar: Detection of SARS CoV-2 in Wastewater to Inform Public Health](#)

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## Video of the Week: Happy Birthday ORD!

### In the Lab:

**States Will Learn More About Wastewater Monitoring on the ORD Tools & Resources Webinar**

This week, CESER's Jay Garland will present ORD's research to shape a scientific approach to monitoring community COVID-19 infection in communities by measuring the virus' molecular signal in wastewater, and efforts to apply this work as a partner in Ohio's wastewater monitoring network. This work is helping advance the science of wastewater epidemiology while supporting Ohio's public health officials make real-time decisions on how and where to deploy public health resources.

### **ORD to Share CoV-2 Research Overview with Region 2 and its Caribbean Consortium**

Last week, ORD shared an overview of our SARS-CoV-2 research to the Region 2 Caribbean Consortium represented by universities in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, non-governmental organizations, and the Region 2's Regional Science Council, the Laboratory Services and Applied Science Division, and the Superfund and Emergency Management Division.

### **SBIR Phase II Project Completed**

Renuvix, LLC, an EPA SBIR small business out of North Dakota, recently completed their Phase II project. With Phase II funding, Renuvix successfully developed isocyanate-free polyurethane resins for one-component, ambient-cured coatings. These novel resins address the problem of toxicity of isocyanates used for the production of polyurethane coatings without sacrificing quality or performance. Renuvix is now focused on manufacturing and commercialization and has identified potential customers in the United States and Europe.

### **Completed RARE Project: Phytoremediation of Slightly Brackish, PAH-contaminated Groundwater from 250 Foot Depth**

A Region 9 RARE project successfully demonstrated the use of hybrid poplar trees and a solar powered pumping system to create a more environmentally friendly pump and treat system for naphthalene remediation at a Superfund site in the Central Valley of California. These initial results, published in the journal Remediation, provide hope for similar application at other contaminated sites characterized by groundwater at considerable depths, especially at Superfund sites where costly pump-and-treat systems have been used long-term to treat low levels of groundwater contamination.

### **Strengthening Transparency in Pivotal Science Underlying Final Significant Regulatory Actions and Influential Scientific Information**

Last week, OSAPE sent the revised Federal Register notice to OMB after making final revisions in response to Agency comments, as well as revising the response to public comments document. ORD plans to have the rule ready for signature by December 29.

### **Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee Meeting – PFAS**

Last week, EPA updated the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC) on the Agency's PFAS efforts. Representatives from OW, OLEM and OCSPP discussed recent PFAS activities, and OSAPE's Susan Burden provided updates on ORD's PFAS research activities.

### **CCTE Staff Meets with European Chemicals Agency**

Last week, CCTE and OCSPP staff met with the European Chemicals Agency to discuss the statement of intent agreement between ECHA and EPA, which focuses on collaborations on chemical management activities. The group discussed ongoing

activities such as sharing chemical data and New Approach Methods for testing chemicals.

### **ORD's Multi-Center Research Team to Present SHC Ecosystem Services and Human Health Benefits Research to Research Area Coordination Team (RACT) partners**

This week, Joel Hoffman (CCTE), Autumn Oczkowski (CEMM) and Bob McKane (CPHEA) will provide an update to the combined Strategic Planning and Research Area Coordination Team (RACT) on an ongoing Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC) research project. Their SHC.9.3.5 research project, "Where to work? Development of remediation and restoration strategies to revitalize (R2R2R) community health and well-being in contrasting urban-estuarine ecosystems", is using contrasting urban-estuarine ecosystems to broadly demonstrate watershed-scale strategies for determining where and how to implement contaminated site R2R2R practices to revitalize community land-water assets and human health and well-being. Demonstration sites include contaminant and health-impacted communities across three estuaries of national concern – San Juan Bay (Oczkowski), Puget Sound (McKane), and Great Lakes (Hoffman). Products from this research will include transfer of user-friendly tools and practical restoration guidance to affected communities, Regions (2, 5, 8 and 10) and Estuary Program partners. The virtual meeting with the RACT is an opportunity for this multi-center ORD-SHC team to gain feedback and further engage these partners in their community-based efforts to link contaminated site R2R2R efforts to human health and well-being. RACT attendees will include representatives from Regions 2, 4, 5, 8 and 10, Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM), Office of Water (OW), Office of Policy (OP), Office of Air and Radiation (OAR), Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and RI Department of Health.

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## **In the Office:**

### **OSIM to Conduct Meetings with ORD Researchers**

OSIM will be conducting collaborative meetings with ORD researchers in the next few months to improve the research environment by creating innovative information technology (IT) projects.

The goal of the meetings is to identify inefficiencies in workflow, tools or missing capabilities, and to continue to build relationships. The type of questions that may be asked during the meetings include:

1. What does your research workflow look like?
2. What are some IT challenges that you face in your work?
3. What are some IT changes that can make your work more efficient?
4. Are there any tools, services, or capabilities that you feel would benefit your work?

This initiative was started to ensure researchers have the resources needed to keep up with the always changing research environment and to adhere to the Evidence Act, a mandate which requires a greater emphasis in our data management capabilities at the EPA.

By building a better research environment, researchers can continue to do the best work of their careers and do so efficiently. This means more work can be done to protect human health and the environment. If anyone is interested in taking part in OSIM's upcoming discussions about researchers' workflow, please [click here](#).

### **Enter FY21 First Quarter Data into TechTracker By December 31**

To ensure that all FY21 first quarter data is in the TechTracker system, we are asking everyone to create any remaining entries for applicable technical support performed during the first quarter (October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020) or add hours to existing entries as necessary for additional time spent on those tasks in that timeframe. Please have all applicable technical support hours for first quarter work entered into [TechTracker](#) by December 31. As a reminder, for any ongoing work from last fiscal year that has extended into FY21, please create a new FY21 entry for that portion of the work (with a begin date of October 1, 2020 or later). Creating a new FY21 entry for ongoing work is necessary to correctly track that work for the current fiscal year. If you have any questions, please contact your [Program Support Coordinator](#) or the general [ORD TechTracker contact](#).

### **COVID-19 Response Resources**

As a resource for staff, the following information is repeated from previous weeks.

- The agency [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Guidance and Information site](#) is available as a resource for employees on a variety of topics.
- The main page compiles agency communications about COVID-19, as well as guidance from the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management.
- The [EPA FAQs](#) are updated regularly and provide information on a range of topics, including telework, SEE enrollee and ORISE participant telework, retirement and separation from the agency during the COVID-19 response, and the onboarding process.
- An app and website have been developed to help users understand what to do next about COVID-19. The tool provides CDC recommendations on next steps including guidance on social distancing and self-isolating, how to closely monitor symptoms, recommendations on testing, and when to contact a medical provider. Employees can visit the Apple App Store and download the Apple COVID-19 App to their personal Apple devices or visit the [website](#).
- As part of their online COVID-19 resources, CDC provides a [website](#) with helpful information for identifying and managing stress during this time as well as seeking help from a crisis helpline.

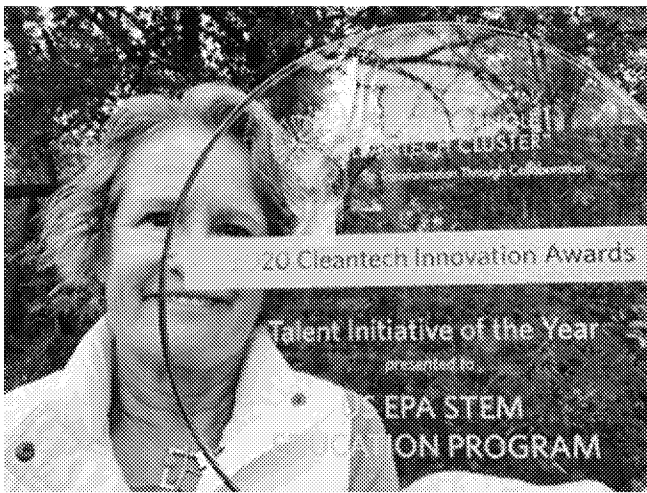
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## **Accolades:**

### **CE-STEM Receives RTCC's Cleantech Talent Initiative Award**

Research Triangle Park's Community Engagement and STEM Education Program (CE-STEM) received the Research Triangle Cleantech Cluster (RTCC) Cleantech Talent Initiative Award for supporting people entering the cleantech industry. The CE-STEM program communicates the Agency's mission through educational programs, and uses EPA cleantech tools like [Generate: The Game of Energy Choices](#) and [EnviroAtlas](#). The CE-STEM team, run by CEMM's Kelly Witter with support from Lauren Bamford (SSC),

reaches out to thousands of students, educators, and other community members each year and are tremendous ambassadors for our research. Witter and Bamford virtually accepted the award last week.



### **CEMM Scientist Awarded ICRW Connections Award**

CEMM's Jim Latimer (ACESD) was recently honored with the Connections Award from the Interagency Conference on Research in the Watersheds (ICRW). Latimer received this award for his service as a junior and senior editor for the Proceedings on the Fifth and Sixth ICRW, and for his upcoming work on the Proceedings on the Seventh ICRW.

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## **In the Community:**

### **Community Engagement & STEM Education Program Outreach**

This week, CEMM's Kelly Witter and Walter Berry (ACESD) led CE-STEM's third session of "Generate: The Game of Energy Choices," for high school students in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The CE-STEM team is running this program in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo to teach students about the tradeoffs between energy, air quality, and climate.

Also this week, CEMM's Kelly Witter and Lauren Bamford (SSC) will virtually present the final installment of Environmental Protectors, a club for students at W.G. Pearson Elementary School, led by EPA and the City of Durham.

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## **Video of the Week: Happy Birthday ORD!**

It's been over a year since the ORD reorganization. To celebrate, we asked ORD staff how they pronounce the acronyms for the names of ORD's Centers and Offices. [Watch this video](#) of your colleagues testing their knowledge and wishing ORD a happy birthday!